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Regional strategy and action plan for civil registration and vital statistics and achieving the commitments of the 2030 Agenda

Strategy and action plan of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems for the period 2023–2027

I.   Introduction

1.   In 2010, the first session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration was convened in Addis Ababa. The first session was the highest-level policy gathering on civil registration and vital statistics that had ever been held in the region. Following the session, a pan-African initiative known as the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems was established to provide support to African Governments in fast-tracking improvements in civil registration and vital statistics systems. The overall aim of the Africa Programme is to provide management and programmatic guidance within the context of the regional agenda for reforming and improving civil registration and vital statistics systems, and specifically to provide more comprehensive and holistic guidance on institutional and operational linkages, workflows and management mechanisms so as to encompass the interdisciplinary and intersectoral interfaces of civil registration and vital statistics systems. The Africa Programme continues to be implemented on the basis of the policy and programmatic guidance provided by the Conference through the resolutions adopted at its sessions.

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[*] CRMC/6/EXP/2022/1.

2.   At its sessions, the Conference has reaffirmed the commitment of countries to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. As part of the global sustainable development agenda, the region's civil registration and vital statistics commitments have been reaffirmed and countries have been called upon to achieve universal legal identity and to achieve registration of at least 100 per cent of births and 80 per cent of deaths. Ten years after the inception of the Africa Programme, and with only eight years left until the conclusion of the 2030 Agenda, African countries and other stakeholders involved in civil registration and vital statistics on the continent are faced with two critical questions: has the Africa Programme delivered its expected outcomes, and what needs to be done in the next few years to accelerate progress in fulfilling unattained commitments in that regard?

3.   In a recent evaluation of the Africa Programme, which contained an assessment of the programme's 10 years of operation, it was shown that significant initiatives had been undertaken at both the national and regional levels to accelerate progress on civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa, in line with commitments made at previous sessions of the Conference. At the regional level, a robust policy and advocacy framework for the development of civil registration and vital statistics systems has been set up, which, among other things, has enabled the setting of policy direction for civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa and has led to the provision of systematic technical guidance to countries, including in the form of training sessions, manuals and guidelines, and the facilitation of direct financial assistance to complement national resources for civil registration and vital statistics. At the national level, it is evident that a majority of countries have participated in and benefited from the Programme. A majority of national stakeholders involved in civil registration and vital statistics have successfully participated in training sessions and similar capacity-building activities. A number of countries have actively participated in implementing the policy directives issued under the Africa Programme. For example, 42 countries (77 per cent of African countries) have undertaken comprehensive assessments of civil registration and vital statistics systems and 32 (59 per cent of African countries) have developed national action plans, which is a significant milestone in identifying and implementing strategic approaches for strengthening civil registration and vital statistics systems. Another notable achievement within the region is the increased production of vital statistics from civil registration data. In a report on the status of civil registration and vital statistics in Africa, it was noted that 64 per cent of the 39 countries that had responded to a survey conducted by the secretariat of the Africa Programme in 2017 had compiled vital statistics on births and deaths on the basis of civil registration data, with 38 per cent of the respondent countries producing regular vital statistics reports.[1] Also ongoing are important national projects that are focused on the improvement of stakeholder coordination, the decentralization of civil registration services, the improvement of national registration forms and guidelines, public education and the advocacy of civil registration and vital statistics, the digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics systems and the promotion of interoperability among them and other relevant national systems.

4.   Although there has evidently been much progress in the strengthening of civil registration and vital statistics systems during the past 10 years, existing data for Africa show that not much has changed in terms of improvements in registration completeness for key vital

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[1] Economic Commission for Africa, "Report on the status of civil registration and vital statistics in Africa: outcome of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems monitoring framework" (Addis Ababa, 2017).

events. Challenges faced by most African countries with regard to their civil registration systems were compounded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as operations involving civil registration and vital statistics in many African countries were significantly disrupted, resulting in a gap or postponement in the registration of events. The pandemic also revealed the vulnerability of existing civil registration and vital statistics systems to emergencies and disasters and the risk that much of the progress made in recent years could be reversed in the absence of disaster-resilient systems.

5.	An evaluation undertaken in 2022 contained a review of the progress made in the implementation of the strategy and action plan of the Africa Programme for the period 2017–2021 and provided a critical opportunity to reflect on key bottlenecks and identify strategies that could enable the region to accelerate progress under the new regional strategy and action plan, which will span the period from 2023 to 2027. The new strategy and action plan must not only be ambitious but must also put in place key measures to ensure that the continent makes tangible progress, demonstrated by, at a minimum, sustainable positive shifts in rates of registration completeness. The strategy and action plan is a rallying call to all relevant stakeholders to participate in making civil registration and the compilation of vital statistics achievable endeavours for the continent. The development of the strategy and action plan drew rich input from African registrars general and from members of the civil registration and vital statistics regional core group, and provided robust information on challenges and opportunities for implementation of the Africa Programme and important priorities to be considered in the future.

6.	The attainment of functional civil registration and vital statistics systems is both a development imperative and a pan-African endeavour aimed at bringing dignity to all Africans. Functional civil registration and vital statistics systems enable good governance and underpin the livelihoods of the African people, enabling them to establish critical rights and privileges, including the right to be known and cared for by their Governments. The 2023–2027 action plan presents the vision and perspectives of stakeholders involved in civil registration and vital statistics on the continent, including countries, development partners and key individuals that were involved in the formulation of the Africa Programme. By 2030, Africa must tell a different civil registration and vital statistics story, and it must be a story of success.

## II.	Scope of civil registration and vital statistics in Africa

7.	The international recommendation for the high-priority vital events that are to be recorded is live births, marriages, divorces and deaths.[2] The Conference has also recommended the recording of the four types of events. Therefore, in line with those recommendations, the scope of the civil registration and vital statistics improvement process is set to address live births, marriages, divorces and deaths.
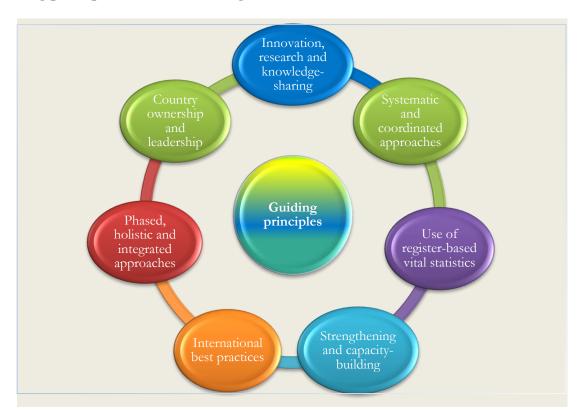
## III.	Guiding principles of the Africa Programme

8.	While the different country contexts are kept in mind, the Programme is anchored in the following guiding principles (see figure I): (a) promoting country ownership and leadership; (b) promoting coordinated approaches and partnerships at the regional and national levels; (c)

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[2] *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*, Statistical Papers, Series M No. 19/Rev.3 (United Nations publication, 2014).

promoting phased, holistic and integrated approaches; (d) strengthening and building the capacities of national and regional civil registration and vital statistics institutions; (e) promoting innovation, research and the sharing of knowledge; (f) encouraging the use of register-based vital statistics for evidence-based policymaking; and (g) bringing international best practices to Africa.

Figure I
Guiding principles of the Africa Programme

Source: Economic Commission for Africa.

IV.   Purpose of the strategy and action plan

9.   In the strategy and action plan, strategic outcomes are identified to accelerate the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems over a period of five years, from 2023 to 2027. That period overlaps with the final two years of the period from 2015 to 2024, which was declared the decade for civil registration and vital statistics in Africa. That initiative was launched with the goal of leaving no child and no country behind through the registration of all births and vital events in Africa.[3] The strategy and action plan will address three questions: What is the status of the ongoing civil registration and vital statistics improvement initiative? What objectives should be reached by 2027, taking into consideration the targets set in the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030? How will those objectives be achieved?

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[3] United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, "Ministers propose 2015–2024 as decade on civil registration", press release, 2015.

V.   Current civil registration and vital statistics environment

10.   An analysis of the current environment indicates the status of the ongoing initiative to improve civil registration and vital statistics. This step is essential for providing an evidence base collected from available sources and knowledge in order to inform the development of the strategy and action plan. Building on the achievements of previous regional strategic plans, that analysis provides a picture of the environment in which the initiative is to be launched and the opportunities and threats present in the external environment. The analysis is based on a consultative processes and outcomes of a survey conducted by the secretariat of the Africa Programme in July and August 2022 of registrars general from 32 African countries and members of the civil registration and vital statistics regional core group. Information was also collected on achievements and major weaknesses identified by countries that had conducted comprehensive assessments in the past five years.

A.   Strengths in the internal environment

11.   The strengths and weaknesses of the Africa Programme stem primarily from those that exist in the internal arrangements of member countries, the regional core group and international organizations. At the country level, progress has been made in the past 10 years in a number of areas. Assessments of civil registration and vital statistics have been undertaken by 42 countries, 32 of which have developed strategic action plans. Every year since 2018, almost all countries have celebrated African Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Day, thereby raising awareness of the importance of civil registration and vital statistics at the national level. Approximately 50 per cent of countries in Africa have fully or partially computerized their registration processes.[4] Digitalization has been adopted as a key regional priority. The organic linkage between civil registration and identification systems has been recognized. The need for national civil registration and vital statistics systems to adopt disaster-resilient strategies is understood, and such strategies are being implemented in several countries. An increasing number of countries are promoting collaboration between the health sector and civil servants, who act as recorders or assistant registrars of births and deaths occurring in health facilities and, in some cases, of those occurring in the broader community.

12.   At the regional level, several key activities aimed at ensuring sustained improvements in civil registration and vital statistics systems have been undertaken in the past five years. The following are the most notable of those initiatives:

(a)   **Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration**. The continued leadership of African ministers responsible for civil registration demonstrates strong political support and reflects the level of commitment of African countries to ensuring that everyone is visible to the Governments;

(b)   **Meeting of registrars general**. African registrars general hold expert meetings twice a year, hosted by the Economic Commission for Africa. They play a critical role in maintaining momentum for the development of civil registration and vital statistics systems, in particular in the period between sessions of the Conference. The registrars general ensure country ownership and leadership, which are core principles of the Africa Programme;

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[4] According to an update on the results of a survey conducted by the secretariat of the Africa Programme in August 2019 (see CRMC/EXP/2019/4).

(c)   **Regional core group**.[5] The strong coordination of the core group and its commitment to supporting the Africa Programme have facilitated the alignment of institutional mandates, thereby maximizing available resources for the continent;

(d)   **Decentralization of civil registration services through the health sector**. A number of countries are working with their health sectors to improve access to birth registration services;

(e)   **United Nations Legal Identity Agenda**. The Legal Identity Agenda was launched in collaboration with the World Bank Group as part of the One United Nations initiative in order to establish a common approach to attaining functional registration systems and providing legal identity, and to support States Members of the United Nations in building holistic, country-owned, sustainable civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems. Under the Agenda, efforts to reduce the global identity gap are closely coordinated within the health sector and proven interventions are conducted with the aim of accelerating progress towards target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely, to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, and target 17.19, aimed at supporting statistical capacity-building;

(f)   **Civil registration and vital statistics mentorship programme**. The programme was designed to provide systematic support to African countries with low rates of civil registration coverage in the development of their civil registration and vital statistics systems. Under the programme, national consultants are placed as mentors within countries' civil registration offices in order to support those countries in various activities, including the assessment of civil registration and vital statistics processes with a view to identifying key bottlenecks obstructing the development of civil registration and vital statistics systems and designing national action plans. The programme was launched in 2021 with participants from 13 countries;

(g)   **Progress monitoring framework**. The secretariat of the Africa Programme has put in place a monitoring framework to assess the rates of civil registration and vital statistics completeness in individual African countries and across the continent.

B.   Challenges in the internal environment

13.   Although several countries have made progress in the development of their legal frameworks for civil registration systems, legislative environments are not properly aligned with international standards in many countries. Inadequate access to certain service delivery points and a lack of simplified and efficient registration processes for the delivery of services to people continue to impede registration in most countries. Only a few countries have arrangements in place to register births and deaths occurring in health facilities. Even in those few countries, the recording of causes of death is often inadequate or not done properly. The use of innovative technologies is still not widespread in many countries.

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[5] The core group is composed of the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Bloomberg Philanthropies "Data for Health" initiative and the International Organization of la Francophonie.

14.   Persistent challenges identified by countries include: a total absence of or limited coordination and collaboration among key government stakeholders; inadequate resources in government budgets; the absence of a monitoring and evaluation framework; a lack of comprehensive, appropriate, integrated and secure solutions in information technology; non-existent or inadequate expertise in civil registration, vital statistics and the recording of causes of death; weak advocacy and communication programmes; registration tools that are not standardized or fully aligned with international recommendations; backlogs in vital events registration that continue to undermine ongoing registration efforts; high staff turnover and a lack of options for retention; a lack of integrated planning and reporting in the field of civil registration; inadequate collection, compilation and dissemination of vital statistics; limited use of vital statistics as evidence in policymaking and planning; and educational institutions that are ill-prepared or lack the capacity to train a sufficient number of civil registration professionals at different levels.

15.   With respect to the secretariat of the Africa Programme, funding sourced largely from development partners has been inadequate and ad hoc in nature. The unpredictability of resources has hampered the implementation of the Programme, including the ability to sustain the human resources required to run the secretariat. The availability of such funding has critical implications for the Programme's success.

C.   Opportunities and threats in the external environment

16.   Forces in the external environment can create opportunities or reduce factors hampering the implementation of the Africa Programme. Opportunities may arise from positive political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental developments. In contrast, external threats to civil registration and vital statistics systems may arise from negative developments in the same areas, such as economic instability, natural hazards and cyberattacks. Developments in the external environment are usually beyond the control of those responsible for implementation of the Africa Programme. However, measures to minimize risk could help to ease the impact of certain negative developments. The following are key notable measures in that regard:

        (a)   **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. Increasing recognition at the global and regional levels of the importance of the civil registration and vital statistics system as an essential factor underpinning the post-2015 development agenda is a major development in the external environment that will create opportunities for the Africa Programme. The targets and indicators that are relevant to civil registration and vital statistics are: target 16.9, which is to provide, by 2030, legal identity for all, including birth registration, to be measured against indicator 16.9.1, namely, the proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age; and target 17.19, which is, by 2030, to have built on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and to support statistical capacity-building in developing countries, to be measured against indicator 17.19.2 (b), namely, the proportion of countries that have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration;

        (b)   **Innovations and new technology**. Existing and emerging information and communications technology, the use of social media to raise awareness and the use of mobile devices to capture and transmit registered information (with or without the use of the Internet) can all be used by civil registration offices to improve geographical coverage and the timeliness of service delivery;

(c)   **COVID-19 pandemic**. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a global pandemic.[6] In line with the guidelines established in that regard, African Governments identified the essential public and private institutions that were to remain open during the lockdowns imposed to control the pandemic. Civil registration was classified as an essential service in most countries. Over the past two years, important lessons have been learned, including with regard to the central role of population data as an enabler of good governance and, in particular, the critical need for continuous and reliable sources of demographic data (especially data on births, deaths and causes of death) provided by civil registration and vital statistics systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has, in a unique way, demonstrated to individuals, Governments and the broader development community the value of investing, and the cost of not investing, in the building of functional civil registration and vital statistics systems.

17.   At the regional level, other factors in the external environment that could threaten or slow the implementation of measures for improving civil registration and vital statistics include: political instability, weak coordination and collaboration among international, regional and national stakeholders, a lack of institutional commitment, participation and delivery at all levels and competition for limited resources among the organizers of different initiatives. At the country level, the following factors could impede initiatives to improve civil registration and vital statistics systems: resistance to change, financial downturns, the risk of digital systems being hacked and unexpected environmental hazards.

D.   Need for accelerated improvements

18.   According to data published by the United Nations Children's Fund, sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 57 per cent of all unregistered births worldwide.[7] In 2019, less than half of children under 1 year of age in West and Central Africa (45 per cent) and East and Southern Africa (33 per cent) had their births registered, and a much lower number were in possession of birth certificates. In an analysis of the global distribution of children under 5 years of age whose births were not registered, Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were highlighted as being home to 11 per cent, 10 per cent and 7 per cent of all unregistered children, respectively. With regard to death registration, data from WHO show that Africa lags far behind other global regions, with only 10 per cent of deaths registered among countries in WHO African Region[8] and with few countries capable of producing statistics on the causes of death of sufficient quality to guide decision-making on issues of public health.

19.   In an underperforming civil registration system, individuals remain unrecorded and hence unrecognized by the State. Civil registration records are the desirable source of vital statistics; however, most African countries have not benefited from a continuous supply of reliable data on vital events, including on causes of death, to support informed policymaking and the implementation and monitoring of development plans. Instead, the need for vital statistics has been met by conducting expensive periodic demographic and health surveys and decennial population censuses. Furthermore, in the absence of reliable information on causes

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[6] **WHO, "WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19", press release, 11 March 2020.**

[7] **United Nations Children's Fund, *Birth registration for every child by 2030: are we on track?* (New York, 2019).**

[8] WHO, *SCORE for Health Data Technical Package: Global report on health data systems and capacity, 2020* (Geneva, 2021).

of death, there is no solid basis for determining which diseases have major impacts on the population. This, in turn, has had a negative impact on efforts to improve people's well-being. There is therefore an urgent need for a strategic shift in the registration of the significant life events of individuals for the betterment of society.

VI. Strategic direction for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Africa

20.   The strategic direction is set by stating a vision and a mission for achieving the desired civil registration and vital statistics systems in all African countries. This process is an essential element of strategic planning because it establishes the direction and the means for growth of the Africa Programme and determines the approach adopted in order to build the civil registration and vital statistics systems of each country.

21.   The vision that will guide the actions related to civil registration functions in Africa is "everyone visible in Africa". The mission statement describes the direction to be followed to ensure the achievement of that vision and the expected social impact of the strategy and action plan on countries in Africa. The mission is to build the foundation for the acquisition of legal identity from birth by all in order to ensure the realization of universal basic human and civil rights, to enable improved service delivery through interoperable systems and to provide, through the building of an efficient and complete civil registration and vital statistics system, a solid basis for informed, evidence-based planning and decision-making.

VII. Strategic outcomes, objectives and enablers

22.   Four major strategic outcomes and a set of enablers were identified through consultations with stakeholders that were held with a view to addressing challenges relating to the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Africa and achieving the mission and vision described above. The new strategy and action plan will cover a period of five years, from 2023 to 2027. At the end of that period, the implementation of the plan will be assessed rigorously, and the strategic outcomes will be revisited in the context of the targets set in the Sustainable Development Goals.

A.   Strategic outcomes

23.   The following four strategic outcomes have been identified:

(a)   **Strategic outcome 1: Foundation for the acquisition of legal rights and privileges and legal identity by all**. By 2027, at least 40 African countries will have put in place a reformed legal framework, aligned with international standards, that provides a solid foundation for the administration of comprehensive civil registration and vital statistics and identity management systems;

(b)   **Strategic outcome 2: Reliable data and vital statistics**. By 2027, high-quality and timely registration-based vital statistics, underpinned by sound statistical methodologies, will be available and accessible to users for informed planning, monitoring and decision-making in at least 40 countries;

(c)   **Strategic outcome 3: Improved governance in public administration services**. By 2027, government stakeholders involved in civil registration and vital statistics in at least

30 countries will be benefiting from the sharing of information across robust and interoperable systems, access to which is governed by adequate regulations and frameworks on data protection;

(d) **Strategic outcome 4: Modernization of civil registration and vital statistics systems**. By 2027, at least 30 countries will have enhanced capacities to develop or improve digitalization and to promote the interoperability of civil registration and vital statistics and other related systems at the national level.

B. Strategic enablers

24. A set of factors that are aimed at enabling the achievement of the strategic outcomes was also identified on the basis of the learning and growth perspectives of the balanced scorecard approach to strategic management. In broad terms, the enablers refer to the human capacity and environment required to achieve the strategic outcomes. They comprise a strong administrative structure and capable human resources at the secretariat of the Africa Programme, the mobilization of financial resources for planned activities at the regional level and investment in multisectoral skills and capabilities related to civil registration and vital statistics. More specifically, by 2027, the goals are to have built a capable programme office that leads the Africa Programme (see figure II), to have stakeholders collaborating and combining their efforts towards a common goal by mobilizing resources for civil registration and vital statistics at the regional and national levels and to have increased investments by the Africa Programme in human and information capital through the development of regional standards and guidelines and through training sessions to build multisectoral skills and capabilities related to civil registration and vital statistics.

C. Strategic objectives and activities

25. The strategy is structured around the four strategic outcomes and the three strategic enablers described above. The strategic outcomes are broken down into strategic objectives, which comprise the processes that must be put in place to achieve those outcomes. Those objectives are further broken down into a number of activities (see tables 1–4). The strategic enablers and activities needed to create the proper environment for the achievement of the strategic outcomes are broken down in table 5.

Table 1
Strategic outcome 1. Foundation for the acquisition of legal rights and privileges and legal identity by all

Strategic objectives	Activities
1.1. Improve and harmonize legislative environments for the administration of viable civil registration and identity management systems	1.1.1. Review and adapt to the specificities of African countries the draft guidelines on the legislative framework for civil registration, vital statistics and identity management, prepared by the Statistics Division of the United Nations in 2019
	1.1.2. Organize training sessions on ways to operationalize the adopted guidelines on the legislative framework for civil registration, vital statistics and identity management
	1.1.3. Provide advisory services to countries, upon request
1.2. Improve the coverage and	1.2.1. Organize training sessions on advocacy and communications on civil registration on the basis of the guide entitled "Handbook on civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems:

Strategic objectives	Activities
completeness of civil registration	communication for development", issued by the Statistics Division of the United Nations in 2019
	1.2.2. Promote linkages between civil registration and the health sector to improve the coverage and completeness of birth and death registration
	1.2.3. Conduct training sessions to implement the third draft of the practical guide on the improvement of death registration and causes of death processes within a civil registration and vital statistics system, issued by the African Centre for Statistics of the Economic Commission for Africa in October 2017
	1.2.4. Conduct studies to improve the registration of marriages and divorces
	1.2.5. Support countries with low rates of birth and death registration and low levels of recording of causes of death
	1.2.6. Facilitate South-South technical support
	1.2.7. Develop guidelines on ways to monitor and evaluate the performance of civil registration and vital statistics systems in countries
	1.2.8. Encourage interregional knowledge exchange and the sharing of good practices related to civil registration and vital statistics
1.3. Align civil registration practices in Africa with international standards	1.3.1. Develop guidelines, adapted to the needs of the region, on the operations and management processes needed to build resilience in civil registration and vital statistics systems in conflict or post-conflict situations and in emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic
	1.3.2. Organize subregional training workshops on the *CRVS Systems Improvement Framework,* issued by the Africa Programme, the Economic Commission for Africa and partners in 2021
	1.3.3. Support countries in the implementation of the *CRVS Systems Improvement Framework*
	1.3.4. Develop a tool to assess the cost of developing strategies and action plans to accompany the *CRVS Systems Improvement Framework*
	1.3.5. Set up a mechanism to review countries' improvement plans

Table 2
Strategic outcome 2. Reliable data and vital statistics

Strategic objectives	Activities
2.1. Harmonize the production of vital statistics from civil registration data through the development of standards, concepts and methods	2.1.1. Organize training workshops on the production of vital statistics from civil registration data, including data on causes of death, on the basis of the *Guidelines and Template for Developing a Vital Statistics Report*, issued by the Economic Commission for Africa in 2017
2.2. Improve the availability of vital	2.2.1. Partner with organizations that have already developed guidelines on the linkages between verbal autopsy approaches and

statistics produced from civil registration data, including data on causes of death	civil registration and vital statistics systems in order to organize training workshops
2.3. Promote the use of vital statistics produced from civil registration data	2.3.1. Develop a document on ways to advocate the use of vital statistics produced from civil registration data

Table 3
Strategic outcome 3. Improved governance in public administration services

Strategic objectives	*Activities*
3.1. Secure and maintain political commitment for civil registration and vital statistics	3.1.1. Organize sessions of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration
	3.1.2. Develop advocacy materials for the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration
3.2. Strengthen collaboration and cooperation among pan-African organizations and development partners	3.2.1. Convene meetings of the regional core group
	3.2.2. Develop a strategy for the involvement of regional economic communities of the African Union and subregional offices of the Economic Commission for Africa in the activities of the Africa Programme
	3.2.3. Report to each meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa
	3.2.4. Establish a user-friendly website on the Africa Programme for the sharing of knowledge and the monitoring of progress made in efforts to improve civil registration and vital statistics in the region
	3.2.5. Develop and disseminate a biannual regional civil registration and vital statistics newsletter
3.3. Strengthen and sustain integrated multisectoral coordination efforts and technical mechanisms at the national level	3.3.1. Organize expert meetings of registrars general
	3.3.2. Conduct workshops on the application of guidelines on the drafting of memorandums of understanding for better coordination among major stakeholders at the country level

Table 4
Strategic outcome 4. Modernization of civil registration and vital statistics systems

Strategic objectives	*Activities*
4.1. Enhance the capacity of countries to promote or improve digitalization	4.1.1. Undertake an assessment of the status of digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics systems with the aim of deriving therefrom recommendations on best practices for countries
	4.1.2. Produce a document on best practices in the area of digital civil registration and vital statistics, including a checklist of desirable features of civil registration software
	4.1.3. Update and simplify existing guidelines on the digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics systems

	4.1.4. Establish a pool of experts on digitalization through hands-on training on the use of a guidebook that is to be created on the digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics systems
	4.1.5. Provide advisory services to countries, upon request
4.2. Promote the interoperability of civil registration and vital statistics and other systems at the national level	4.2.1. Conduct case studies with a view to advocating the interoperability of civil registration and vital statistics systems, identity management systems, and health-related and other systems
	4.2.2. Organize training sessions for system managers on the interoperability of systems

Table 5
Strategic enablers

Strategic enablers	*Activities*
5.1. A secretariat with the capacity to lead and manage the Africa Programme	5.1.1. Conduct an independent evaluation of the Africa Programme
	5.1.2. Provide advisory services to countries
	5.1.3. Develop a strategy on establishing sustainable capacity development for civil registration and vital statistics
	5.1.4. Develop a research agenda to fill knowledge gaps on ways to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics and identity management systems and on pertinent emerging and topical issues
5.2. The mobilization of resources for civil registration and vital statistics at the regional level	5.2.1. Mobilize support for the activities identified in order to implement the strategy and action plan
5.3. Investment in multisectoral skills and capabilities related to civil registration and vital statistics	5.3.1. Support efforts to sustain the expert pool platform launched by the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics of the International Development Research Centre of Canada
	5.3.2. Build the capacity of the Takwimu Young African Statisticians Programme in civil registration and vital statistics
	5.3.3. Initiate and support curriculum development and training on civil registration and vital statistics in academic institutions
	5.3.4. Initiate and support in-service training on civil registration and vital statistics in African training institutions

VIII. Proposed improvement to the governance structure of the secretariat of the Africa Programme

26.   The secretariat requires a management and technical structure that can facilitate the strategic shift required to drive the desired changes in the registration of vital events and the supply of vital statistics to inform decisions at the national and regional levels. Therefore, the existing structure and staffing conditions of the Africa Programme need to be revisited. The identified strategic outcomes and objectives require a revamped organizational structure to advance the civil registration and vital statistics agenda in Africa.

27.   As illustrated in figure II, the proposed revised structure has a programme coordinator and two units, namely a capacity development unit and a stakeholder and meetings servicing

unit. The secretariat will continue to operate as part of the African Centre for Statistics of the Economic Commission for Africa. The new structure will be managed by the Chief of the Demographic and Social Statistics Section of the African Centre, who will report to the Director of the African Centre and to the civil registration and vital statistics regional core group. Through the Director of the African Centre, the secretariat will work closely with the proposed expert committee of African registrars general.

Figure II
Proposed governance structure of the Africa Programme

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